

Victorian Perspectives on Religion and Science

- I. Scientific advances challenged the Biblical world view for many Victorians
 - A. For example, Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) argued that geological processes worked gradually over vast expanses of time
 - B. Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) only codified theories that had developed over decades
- II. Historical, geological, archaeological, and textual analysis of the Bible (the "Higher Criticism" originating in Germany) challenged Biblical infallibility
 - A. David Friedrich Strauss's *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* is a famous example
 - B. Strauss explores historical inconsistencies in different Gospel versions of the same events
 - C. Arthur Hugh Clough's "Epi-strauss-ium" (1847) is a satirical response to Strauss
- III. At the same time, there was a strong movement toward faith
 - A. William Paley's "Argument from Design" and his watchmaker analogy argued that the universe had a creator, just as the existence of a watch requires a watchmaker
 - B. There were numerous reform movements within the Anglican church
 1. "High church": the Oxford Movement sought a bridge between Catholicism and Protestantism
 2. "Low church": a vibrant evangelical movement discard liturgical formalities and ornamentation and make Christianity appeal more to the masses
- IV. Matthew Arnold's poem, "Dover Beach" beautifully articulates the Victorian crisis of faith
 - A. Arnold uses the image of pebbles washing back and forth on the beach as a metaphor for the ebb and flow of human misery
 - B. He also sees the Sea of Faith as ebbing with a "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar"
 - C. The closing lines depict humanity as armies wandering blindly in the dark, confused by conflicting messages
 - D. In all this uncertainty, love may be all we have